

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Charlotte Bernard

COLLECTION: 4700.2664

IDENTIFICATION: Charlotte Bernard was born in Houston, Texas in 1954 but spent most of her life in Mossville, Louisiana.

INTERVIEWER: Stephanie Dragoon

SERIES: Mossville History Project - Field Interviews

INTERVIEW DATE: May 11, 2016

FOCUS DATES: 1960s-1970s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 4621

Lives in Moss Bluff with her parents and granddaughter; born in Houston, Texas in 1954; moved to Mossville when she was seven years old because father got job with Conoco; enjoyed Mossville's swimming pool and ballpark; lived in big house with five sisters and three brothers; mother taught Sunday school classes at Saint John Bosco in Westlake; on weekends, stayed in Duson with paternal grandparents or visited maternal grandparents near Evangeline; happy, close-knit family; mother's cooking; enjoyed school; went to school in Mossville until integration, then rode bus to Westlake High School; was mediator in family; when family cow got sick, she tried to treat it with over the counter medicines from drugstore; got married at age eighteen; as a teenager, had horrible illness which was probably encephalitis; family tried to keep her from seeing herself in mirror; confined to wheelchair; mother had to help raise her son; relearning to walk; was able to raise her children; Bernard helps her mother, who has Alzheimer's and diabetes; lived with her parents because they helped her with her health problems; was sad to leave Mossville but loves Moss Bluff; left Mossville a little more than a year ago; favorite activities in Mossville; sad that people in Mossville were dying, perhaps from the water; lived in Lake Charles for a while; her children wanted to return to Mossville; changes during Sasol buyout of Mossville; then Mossville looked like a ghost town; the buyout is a sad thing and a blessing simultaneously; some of the old people want to die in Mossville rather than leave; father's garden, cows, horses; interactions with farm animals; father interrupting ball games because ball field was on his route to milk cows; close relationship with parents; married before graduation, while in twelfth grade; married Daryl Joseph Walker, had three children; defied doctor's expectations that she'd be unable to walk or have children after illness; Daddy scared his six daughters' potential suitors by carrying a gun around; father's side was part Indian and didn't believe in Western medicine and drugs; current health problems include arthritis; attended church at Saint John Bosco as teenager; later she changed to Church of Christ; currently lacks transportation to attend church; father was a Knight of Peter Claver in the Catholic church;

Mossville population was like one big family; local man named Josh who was on *American Idol*; Bernard's mother loved Josh; difficulties getting around due to disability; struggles to learn computers; learning Facebook and texting; great advancements in technology since her childhood; now you can do everything through your computer; granddaughter and other kids live on their cell phones; kids can't deal with the pressures of life because always on computer; widowed and left a single mother; not everybody realizes what a blessing it is that Sasol is buying Mossville; water too polluted in Mossville; people also got hurt in plants; some people sued plant and got money; baby boy died from eating polluted dirt; other mysterious illnesses of locals; got bottled drinking water from rec center because everybody knew the water in Mossville was polluted; would bathe in water but not drink it; water pollution meetings; one son works as water treatment professional; aunt took her to healers for treatments, but Bernard considers God the one true healer; aunt also made home remedies out of leaves that drained Bernard's fever while she slept; didn't really believe in treaters, felt a conflict with Catholic church; dreams of walking or riding horse through Mossville; mother's Alzheimer's causes her to think she's still in Mossville.

TAPE: 1 (T4621)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 4 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 28 pages

PHOTOGRAPHS / PHOTOGRAPHER: Three photographs taken during interview, including two photographs of interviewee Bernard and one of interviewer Dragoon. Photographer Rebecca Cooper.

OTHER MATERIALS: Correspondence

RESTRICTIONS: none